DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 332 921 SO 021 352

TITLE Music Education: Rationale and Commentary. Curriculum Concept Paper.
INSTITUTION Oregon State Dept. of Education, Salem.
PUB DATE Nov 90
NOTE 17p.
PUB TYPE Guides - Non-Classroom Use (055)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Core Curriculum; *Curriculum Development; Educational Objectives; Elementary Education; Elementary School Curriculum; *Music Education; Relevance (Education); *Role of Education; Student Educational Objectives
IDENTIFIERS *Oregon

ABSTRACT

A resource of statements about the values of music in education, this paper is intended to help answer the question, "Why is it important to teach general music to children in grades K-6?" Material is quoted from several disciplines including psychology, education, music education, and the medical field. The paper is directed primarily to music educators and to administrators in Oregon who are responsible for curriculum balance in schools. (DB)

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Music Education: Rationale and Commentary

Curriculum Concept Paper

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MUSIC FOR ELEMENTARY CHILDREN

MUSIC EDUCATION: RATIONALE AND COMMENTARY
Curriculum Concept Paper

Introduction

"Virtually all recent educational reports validate and advocate the inclusion of music and the arts in the school curriculum. The study of music must not be considered 'optional' or an 'extra' but rather a central part of every school curriculum.... Music is basic."
(Music Common Curriculum Goals, Oregon Department of Education, 1990, page 2.)

The vehicle for musical growth and understanding is the well-thought-out, carefully sequenced elementary general music program. This paper is a resource of statements about the value of music in education. It contains quotations from the research and opinions of sources outside music education and of music practitioners.

The purpose of this paper is to help answer the question, "Why is it important to teach general music to children in grades K-6?" Material has been quoted from psychology, education, music education, and the medical field. The attempt has been to answer the question as objectively as possible yet realizing that music is by nature a subjective and an aesthetic field of study. It is directed primarily to music educators and to administrators who are responsible for school curricular balance.

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Scientific Research

✓ **Research on Multiple Intelligences as they relate to music education.**

Howard Gardner, a Harvard University psychologist, thinks there are at least seven intelligences. Music is one of these.

"Intelligence is not an absolute such as height that can be measured simply, largely because people have multiple intelligences rather than one single intelligence.

"In all, I have identified seven forms of intelligence. The two that are valued most highly in this society are linguistic and logical-mathematical intelligences. When people think of someone as smart, they are usually referring to those two, because individuals who possess linguistic and logical-math-

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ematical abilities do well on tests that supposedly measure intelligence.

"But there are five other kinds of intelligence that are every bit as important: spatial, muscial, bodily-kinesthetic and two forms of personal intelligence--interpersonal, knowing how to deal with others, and intrapersonal, knowledge of self. None of these ought to have a priority over others.

"What I'm saying is that while both logical-mathematical and linguistic are important today, it won't always be that way."[1]

In other research Gardner discusses the area of feeling.

"I have already noted the universally acknowledged connection between musical performance and the feeling life of persons; and since feelings occupy a central role in the personal intelligences, some further comments may be in order here. Music can serve as a way of capturing feelings, knowledge about feelings, or knowledge about the forms of feeling, communicating them from the performer or the creator to the attentive listener."[2]

On aesthetics, Gardner says that the study of music and aesthetics is somewhat different from the study of other areas.

"As an aesthetic form, music lends itself especially well to playful exploration with other modes of intelligence and symbolization, particularly in the hands (or ears) of highly creative individuals. Yet, according to my own analysis, the core operations of music do not bear intimate connections to the core operations in other areas; and therefore, music deserves to be considered as an autonomous intellectual realm.[3]

Gardner has established in his research that there is a musical intelligence in each normal human, that it is quite different in nature than the other intelligences, and that it must be nurtured in different ways. He says . . .

". . . all humans possess certain core abilities in each of the intelligences."[4]

Gardner discusses the need in preschool and early elementary years for instruction that will emphasize opportunity for each child" . . . to discover something of their own peculiar interests and abilities."[5]

In a study of biographies of talented people in various disciplines including music, math and art, researchers found that many had a crystallizing experience. This experience involved a memorable contact or exposure of a person to the area of their particular talent and potential.

"We would like to raise the question about whether crystallizing experiences are indeed just a purview of the most gifted, or whether they may occur in more mundane ways with individuals who are closer to the norm. The present study casts no light on this question. Still, it would seem to be good pedagogy--if not just good common sense--to treat all children as if they have the potential for crystallizing experiences, and to expose them at an early age to materials that may motivate them to explore a domain. It may turn out that there are far more 'gifted' children than could have been anticipated from the unplanned encounters that until now have been the chief focus for crystallizing experiences."[6]

Gardner strongly desires that all children develop all of their intelligences to their full potential.

"First of all, it is clear that many talents, if not intelligences, are overlooked nowadays; individuals with these talents are the chief casualties of the single-minded, single-funnelled approach to the mind. There are many unfilled or poorly filled niches in our society and it would be opportune to guide individuals with the right set of abilities to these billets. Finally, our world is beset with problems: to have any chance of solving them, we must make the very best use of the intelligences available. Perhaps recognizing the plurality of intelligences and the manifold ways in which human individuals may exhibit them is an important first step.[7]

A well-thought-out elementary general music progam teaches to the "music intelligence," the feelings and aesthetics as described by Gardner and gives opportunity for the "crystallizing" experience to both the average and the gifted child.

✓ **Neurological Research: Elementary general music as an important avenue for brain and body development.**

Most people are now familiar with the idea that the brain has regional specialization, for example cognitive information about language comes from the leftside and music creativity for composing from the right. In discussing this phenomena, neurologist Dr. Frank R. Wilson says . . .

". . . unless the left side of the brain is intact, the skills which compare to the operations of a digital computer are deficient, and communication skills are usually impaired. And when there has been damage to the right side of the brain, the skills we compare to an analog computer are likely to be defective, and we may notice impairment in intuitive, artistic and musical abilities. It is argued, and I believe it is correct to argue, that a balanced education is one which addresses itself to the nurturing of the diverse tendencies which reside separately, but cooperatively, in the two halves of the brain."[8]

About the relationship of brain development to the movement of the body, he says:

"The mind does not come into being, or grow, without bodily movement.[9]

"Musical activities rely on movements in which the entire body participates, but emphasize development of precise control of the smaller muscles of the arms and hands and those controlling breathing and voice. Because of this total body movement, few other activities in which we engage are as well-suited as musical practice for building accuracy, speed, timing, smoothness and coordination of muscle control."[10]

Emphasis is given the importance of music as a stimulus for total development.

"Music is not the only effective primer for the developing mind and body, but it is in fact an exacting and progressive blend of scientific, artistic and physical disciplines which can be undertaken and enjoyed at a very early age . . ."[11]

Like Gardner, Wilson is telling us to educate all of the brain (all of the known "intelligences"). Movement is an important part of the elementary music curriculum. The first emphasis is on feeling, the second on hearing and the third on seeing and reading the music. Gross muscle movements are emphasized in the beginning stages; then small muscle movements. Both the feeling or sensing of the music and the movement to music are in line with Wilson's research on brain development.

Music in a Balanced Curriculum

√ Educational Reform and Music: Carol Richardson

At the time of Richardson's research on the five reports, The Paedeia Proposal, A Nation at Risk, High School, Academic Preparation for College, and A Place Called School, she was a doctoral candidate in residence at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. In her research, she analyzed the thinking behind the educational reform and then tried to determine how these reports relate to music and arts education. It should be noted at the outset, that in the main, these reports address curriculum at the high school level and therefore some extrapolation is necessary to extend the presented philosophies to the elementary school. The exception is the report by Goodlad, A Place Called School.

Richardson says that in the Paedeia, education . . .

". . . should prepare the individual to earn a living, attain a decent standard of living, and have enough free time to make a good life for himself or herself."[12]

For most students, music fits under the "good life" category. Lest the reader thinks this is soft ground, the writer hastens to discuss the curriculum suggested. Music is placed . . .

". . . under a third column of the common curriculum, the area in which students gain an enlarged understanding of ideas and values through experiencing books and products of human artistry. The sorts of musical experiences considered essential include the production of music through performance and composition and the understanding of music through listening and discussion. Pleasurable participation in music is seen as the best way to musical understanding, and The Paedeia Proposal states that 'all children should have such pleasurable experiences'. By placing music firmly in the common curriculum in the company of literature, visual art, and dance, Paedeia is a clear advocate for the continuation of music in the schools."[12]

Richardson was not pleased with the attitude toward the arts in the Nation at Risk. That report does suggest that music and the other fine and performing arts should be included in the curriculum, but not as one of the "New Basics." It would be interesting to know what would have been said if the elementary school, rather than secondary "curriculum" (and the United States' position in the world) were the focal point of the report.

Richardson bounces back attitudinally as she shows satisfaction with the strong advocacy position for the arts in High School. She states:

"... the arts are not a frill but are 'essential if we are to survive together with civility and joy'. High School treats music, dance, and visual arts as an essential part of human experience and recommends that they be studied to discover how humans communicate through their nonverbal symbol systems."[13]

Even stronger support is found in the report, Academic Preparation for College: What Students Need to Know and Be Able to Do. Richardson says,

"Academic Preparation includes the arts in its listing of basic academic subjects because they challenge and extend human experience while engaging the imagination and fostering flexible ways of thinking and creative modes of expression."[13]

Musical competencies are also listed. Richardson paraphrases by saying,

"It expects each student to identify and describe musical forms, listen receptively, read notation, evaluate performance, and express himself or herself by playing, singing, or composing. This report contradicts A Nation at Risk's cultural elitism by insisting on study of the arts for all students, no matter what career path or educational track a student has chosen."[13]

In A Place Called School, a report that discusses elementary school curriculum specifically and that includes the arts in the basic curriculum, Richardson says:

"It shows a concern for the all-around development of the individual by including such specific, wide-ranging personal eductional aims as emotional and physical well-being, creativity and aesthetic expression, and self-realization. The arts have a special role to play in the students' development, according to this report, for through them students can learn to appreciate the aesthetic contributions of other cultures."[13]

Paul Lehman (Past-President of MENC), in a pamphlet entitled Music in Today's Schools: Rationale and Commentary discusses what he calls the "pseudo-problem" of time. Lehman says the author of A Place Called School, Goodlad makes it very clear that there is plenty of time in the school day for the arts. Lehman writes,

"He (Goodlad) proposes that in a typical elementary school week of 23.5 instructional hours, 1.5 hours be allocated each day to language arts and one hour to mathematics. It is difficult, he maintains, to conceive of children benefiting proportionately from still more time. He further proposes that 2.5 hours each week be devoted to social studies, 2.5 physical education. 'We still have 3.5 hours each week for the arts.' he concludes with obvious satisfaction"[14]

Four of the five reports speak strongly for the inclusion of the arts and the fifth says the arts are important for at least a sizable number of students. Therefore, it appears safe to say that THE ARTS ARE AN IMPORTANT PART OF THE SCHOOL CURRICULUM and that music and the arts are an even more important part of the elementary curriculum. This conclusion is drawn because most educational writers present a broader core curriculum at the elementary school and then narrow this a bit as they discuss high school. Four of these five reports were secondary-oriented.

✓ **School Superintendents' Views: Robert Spillane, Superintendent of Fairfax County (VA) Public Schools; Robert Turner, former Superintendent of Schools with the Thompson R2-J District in Loveland, Colorado.**

These two superintendents could represent the many administrators who are vocal supporters of including music and the arts in the basic curriculum.

Spillane, in an article, discusses the need for education in music and the arts in order to be fully educated. He says,

"As a superintendent, I would be highly remiss in my duty to provide the best education for each individual if I did not actively pursue all means to achieve a balanced curriculum that includes the arts."[15]

Spillane sees the major role of education to be the development of students' full potential in both affective and cognitive areas. He states that students . . .

". . . will develop whole and healthy only if the arts, which challenge a part of the brain not actively engaged by other studies, are included."[16]

In a statement reflective of Gardner's emphasis on considering the whole person, that is, all the "intelligences" and of Wilson's thoughts on educating the "whole brain," Spillane says,

"Every human being has potential in the arts. To neglect the development of this potential would be to half-educate the individual. This certainly makes a case for beginning with a strong general arts program at the elementary school level to introduce all students to the basic languages of the arts and the joy of participating in the arts. ***If the opportunity to develop artistic talent is not available before adolescence, children are not likely to acquire basic literacy in using these tools to capture their ideas and feelings in artistic and creative ways.***"[16] **(emphasis added)**

Spillane thinks creativity is very important as we look at technology, international trade, and business management. He says creativity is crucial if our nation is to continue to be a leader.

"Creative people are self-starters and innovators; they also are better at understanding systems such as language or mathematics, which makes it easier for them to learn reading and math than those who learn by rote. There also is ample

evidence that contact with the arts was the basis for development of the creative capacities of some of the world's greatest scientists, mathematicians, inventors, and politicians, Albert Schweitzer, Albert Einstein, Benjamin Franklin, and Winston Churchill all are examples of outstanding achievers who developed creativity through the arts."[16]

Superintendent Turner Discusses the "back to basics" movement in an article for the Music Educators Journal. He thinks that we need music now more than ever in our schools. He says,

"As we learn to use and adapt to growing technology, music becomes even more important to us. It helps to preserve the uniquely human qualities in an environment in which technology seems to diminish those qualities and reduce us to the function of robots among the machines we have created. Our society must seek the balance between the keyboard of the computer and the keyboard of the piano."[17]

John Naisbitt, the author of Megatrends, agrees with the human need for balance. He would also seem to share the thoughts of the two superintendents for education in the humanizing, feeling areas. He says . . .

". . . whenever new technology is introduced into society, there must be a counterbalancing human response--that is, high touch--or the technology is rejected. The more high tech, the more high touch."[18]

Music education is important to the development of musical, artistic and creative abilities. It is also important to balance the curriculum between the sciences and humanities, between the left and right brain, and between the cognitive and affective.

✓ The Importance of Music: Paul Lehman

Paul Lehman, recent president of the 58,000-member Music Educators National Conference, is considered by many to be the foremost spokesperson in our country for music education.

"Music is intrinsically worthwhile. It needs no further justification. It is worth knowing. It is a field of study with its own special body of knowledge, skills, and ways of thinking. The study of music is important and valuable in itself. Every member of society should have the ability to perform, to create, and to listen to music with understanding."[19]

He goes on to say,

"The arts are an important part of our culture. Historically, one fundamental purpose of education has been to transmit our cultural heritage to succeeding generations, and music is one of the most powerful, the most compelling, and the most glorious manifestations of our heritage.[20]

". . . Music is one of the most powerful and profound symbol systems that exist.[21]

". . . The aesthetician Suzanne Langer (see Suzanne Langer, PHILOSOPHY IN A NEW KEY [New York: Mentor, 1948] 90-94) has sought to answer the question of what mankind finds so appealing about music and the arts. She observes that humans have developed four great symbolic systems: language, literature, mathematics, and music. Each of these is used to represent a different aspect of reality but the function of each is to help us to understand our environment.[21]

"According to Langer, symbol-making is mankind's most human activity. It is an activity more fundamentally human than earning a living. Thus, music is by no means merely an adornment of life; it is a basic manifestation of being human. If we were to fail to cultivate our unique ability to make and use symbols, and allow it to atrophy over time, our humanity would be irreparably diminished."[21]

In relation to the recent national concern about "Students At Risk," Lehman writes,

"... Music in the school provides an opportunity for success for some students who have difficulty with other aspects of the curriculum.[22]

"... Music has proved itself to be a superb means of preventing student dropout."[23]

Lehman discusses a number of important attributes or by-products of music: creativity, self-expression and joy. One of the most important features is that music exalts the human spirit, enhancing the quality of life.

"Music represents one of the most basic instincts in humans. This is why it has played a major role in the social and cultural fabric of every known civilization. And it will continue to do so as far into the future as anyone can see. The only question is whether we want to limit access to musical knowledge and skills to an elite few or whether we want to make them available to all of our citizens to appreciate and enjoy. The answer should be obvious."[24]

The "big picture" is stressed in one of Lehman's concluding statements:

"A nation is judged by posterity not by the size of its gross national product, nor by the destructive capability of its military arsenal, but by its contributions to the arts and humanities. This has been true throughout history. It has become even more true as we expand our potential for making our planet uninhabitable. It is the achievements of a civilization in the arts and humanities that remain when everything else is swept away by time."[25]

✓ Oregon Music Curriculum Symposium

The following are excerpts from research and speeches presented to the Oregon Music Curriculum Symposium, August 1987. The focus was on music education curriculum needs for the 1990s.

Sandy Feldstein, composer, music educator, author, and publisher:

"This generation is turned on to music! Technology is a tool to help us do our job.

"... From a motivational stand-point there are no better tools than the keyboard and the computer."[26]

John McManus, music educator and researcher, proposed the following as number one of eight action goals for Oregon music teachers.

"ACTION GOAL 1: Every music teacher in Oregon should become acquainted with, and provide opportunities for their students to become acquainted with teaching devices and instruments utilizing advanced technology."[27]

Dr. Anne Jensch, elementary music teacher and pre-symposium researcher, presented material based on both professional articles and interviews.

"Electronic keyboards have gained great respect from Oregon teachers and students alike. Dr. Jeanne Frolick, professor from Warner Pacific College, reported in a recent article, 'Many teachers feel they can teach more material using the electronic keyboard, than by using other teaching strategies.' Teachers claim that they teach more effectively and efficiently when students use the keyboard. Students are engaged and motivated by the contemporary sound and visuals associated with electronic technology. A great many students in grades 5-12 are attracted to the electronic sounds found in Pop and Rock music. Teachers report they reach a greater number of students with electronic media. My own experience (in elementary general/music) bears this out. I used two sophisticated synthesizers for teaching purposes this year. Ninety percent more boys than girls stayed after school to explore the capabilities of this instrument. Thirty percent of these boys had never shown any overt interest in music."[28]

Jensch related the use of this equipment to learning styles.

"People learn differently. We each have a preferred sensory way to acquire new information . . . [Quoting Del Aebischer, Music Specialist, Oregon Department of Education] 'The keyboard has made dramatic changes in elementary school music programs. That is because students learn best through feeling (touching), hearing and seeing music.' This [keyboards] accommodates three learning styles, using one teaching tool."[29]

Barbara Dille Peterson, elementary music teacher presented research to the symposium which refers to Bloom's Taxonomy. The taxonomy is organized in six major classes listed from simple to the most complex as follows:

1. Knowledge
2. Comprehension
3. Application
4. Analysis
5. Synthesis
6. Evaluation

Peterson writes:

"Students can and must be taught how to analyze, synthesize and evaluate, and given opportunities to practice these skills.[30]

". . . The child who cannot only recognize a new melody, but perform it on various instruments, improvise upon it, and evaluate the results, has clearly moved beyond a superficial understanding of the concept. He/she has been given opportunities to transcend the usual confines of learning activities and exercise creativity and critical thinking. Music is a field uncommonly rich in opportunities for synthesis, the second to the highest skill level in Bloom's Taxonomy."[30]

She sums up by pointing out that this is not just another education burden, but an opportunity.

"It can be an exciting process as students and teachers find new ways to explore music and develop lifelong thinking skills that will prepare them for an increasingly complex world."[31]

National Expectations

The School Music Program: Description and Standards, a publication of the Music Educators National Conference, lists a number of outcomes under the headings of Valuing, Performing/Reading, Creating, and Listening/Describing. The introductory paragraph for grades 1-3 says . . .

"The primary school years are a time of growth, wonder, excitement, exploration, and discovery. These years are crucial as the child develops a concept of music, gains fundamental skills, and acquires a sensitivity to musical sounds and their beauty. All children need to have regular and continuing musical sounds, using them enjoyably, and responding to them with pleasure."[32]

Then follows a list of music outcomes expected of all children by the end of the 3rd grade. There is a similar list for grades 4-6.

In addition, there are two sets of standards for the implementation of elementary music–a Basic Program (minimal) and a Quality Program. It includes recommendations for time allocations of the school day (7 percent Basic, 9 percent Quality level), for suggested elective instrumental and choral classes, for music to be taught by music specialists and complemented by classroom teachers, for current textbooks and recordings, and for an acoustically planned room.

This book is one of the most current and complete, yet succinct resources available. However, it should be noted that the introductory rationale is abbreviated for it moves quickly into the specifics of what is expected to be taught in elementary schools.

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Concluding Comments

Music should be studied by all children worldwide . . .

. . . because it is considered by most to be the one universal language. From Gardner's viewpoint, it should be studied because each individual has musical intelligence and from Wilson's viewpoint, because it assists in brain and child development.

Generalists in education value music and arts instruction, too.

Some are concerned with the development of the right brain, the affective domain, and/or the creative potential. Others are particularly concerned for the development of the whole person–including the emotions and feelings. Some educators hold to the belief that a person is not truly educated without a thorough grounding in the arts. Balance with technological development is considered important to some. Vocational and/or avocational reasons are touted by others.

Music educators rely heavily on the reasons listed above . . .

. . . and then forge ahead into a difficult area to define, called aesthetics. Nurturing the child's sensitivity to aesthetics–that is to beauty and the nuances in music–is important.

Music educators are concerned for our society . . .

. . . and strive to teach children to perform, read, create, and describe music and to listen to it. All this is done in the hope of having a musically literate society that understands and values music.

Music and the arts play an important role in adult life.

. . . Millions of dollars are spent annually on music records, instruments, and sheet music. Sales are burgeoning in the music electronics field. In entertainment, music and arts events attendance now, for the first time, surpasses attendance at sporting events. With all this time, energy, and money spent on music and the arts during post-school years, it is imperative to invest time, energy, and money on in-school arts instruction. The Oregon Department of Education has suggested that 7% of the instructional time grades K-6, be allocated to general music instruction. It seems reasonable that at least 7% of the school's energy and financial resources should also be allocated to music instruction.

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Acknowledgments

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